

Testimony submitted by

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On behalf of

American Society of Agronomy

Crop Science Society of America

Soil Science Society of America

Prepared for the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

On the Fiscal Year 2019 Appropriations for the U.S Department of Agriculture

The American Society of Agronomy (ASA), Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), and Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) support **\$1.35 billion for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS)** and **\$1.64 billion for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**. Within NIFA we request **\$525 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)**.

The American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America, represent over 18,000 scientists in academia, industry and government. We support more than 13,300 Certified Crop Advisers (CCA), and over 700 Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS). Our members and certified professionals are dedicated to meeting the demands of a growing world population through the pursuit of agronomic, crop and soil science knowledge and application.

America's incredible productivity stems from Federal investments in agricultural science and technology that help farmers through droughts and floods, pests and pathogens, and changing consumer tastes. These investments afford Americans safe and inexpensive food and bring a 20-fold return to the GDP.

We support the following areas of the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission areas for fiscal year 2019 budget:

\$1.35 billion for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). ARS is USDA's intramural, nation-wide research program that solves national agriculture problems of high priority. ARS is uniquely suited to conduct research that requires long-term investments with high-impact payoffs while maintaining the capacity and readiness to respond to emerging and pressing problems.

We remain concerned by the USDA hiring freeze that has prevented hiring for more than 700 vacant scientist positions in ARS alone and is damaging the ability of ARS to carry out its important mission.

\$1.64 billion for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). NIFA houses USDA's suite of extramural programs, which supplement state research initiatives with competitive grants and support agriculture education capacity at local land-grant institutions.

Within NIFA, we specifically support:

\$525 million in for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). AFRI is the premier competitive grants program for research, extension, and education projects that solve critical challenges in food and agricultural systems. The 2014 Farm Bill reauthorized the program and continues the authorization for appropriations of up to \$700 million, but this program remains chronically underfunded and can only afford to fund 22% of the proposals recommended for funding by peer reviewers.

\$291 million for Hatch Act formula funding. Hatch funding supports agricultural research through state agricultural experiment stations at our nation's land-grant colleges and universities. This funding supports local research that directly impacts farmers' bottom lines but is unlikely to result in marketable products, making it unattractive to the private sector and thus in need of public support.

\$358 million for Smith-Lever 3(b) and (c) funding. Smith-Lever funding supports the extension program, a vital link between the scientific findings produced at our land-grant institutions and the agricultural producers, small business owners, consumers, families, and others who directly benefit from this new information. The ability to translate and disseminate research findings as widely and quickly as possible, through trusted, local extension officers, is critical to our ability to address emerging local challenges.

Today, China spends twice as much on agricultural R&D as we do. America used to lead the world in public investments in agriculture science and research, but in 2009, agriculture R&D fell to a historically low 0.035 percent share of the U.S. economy, a level far below what is necessary to meet the critical challenges facing U.S. agriculture in the 21st century. That same year, China increased its investment in agriculture R&D by 16 percent and took the global lead.

Our agricultural scientists are struggling. While federal funding supports two thirds of university research in other biological and life sciences, it only supports one third in agricultural sciences, and no one else is picking up the slack. Innovation and economic prosperity are the direct results of responsible investments in U.S. agricultural science, and scientific advancements are what enable American farmers to continue producing enough food for U.S. citizens and to meet the demand for safe and nutritious food around the world.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony and look forward to working with the Subcommittee as it considers funding for food and agriculture research. Thank you.